(d) whether it is possible for Government to fix prices of imported products covered by EMR; and

(e) if not, how the fair prices would be determined?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) The Patents (Amendment) Act, 1999 which replaced the Patents (Amendment) Ordinance, 1999 contains provisions for protection of public interest and national security. These are in the form of compulsory licensing of exclusive marketing rights (EMRs), exercise of right by government, either on its own or through any authorised person, fixation of price, etc.

(b) and (c) Section 24 (B) of the said Act, provides that EMR confers exclusive right to sell or distribute the substance covered by EMR but does not include right to manufacture. Authority to sell or distribute the said article or substance can be given by the Central Government in public interest under Section 24 (D).

(d) and (e) Section 24(D) empowers the Central Government to fix the price of article or substance covered by EMR.

Route of Trans Asian Railways and Asian Highway

1135. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether ESCAP has finalised the route of Trans Asian Railway and Asian Highway network;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the present status of the project;

(d) the details of schemes finalised by Government to extend infrastructural facilities in the NER including road connectivity to the neighbouring countries for promotion of border trade; and

(e) the details of such existing and proposed schemes including total outdays and commission target?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) Under the aegis of Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development (ALTID) project, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has in an Expert Group Meeting at Dhaka from 25—28 May, 1999,

considered draft reports and suggestions from the various ESCAP Member countries on alignment of Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) linkages including the report submited by India. The ESCAP report has to be accepted by each member country before the route can be finalised.

As regards Asian Highway Road Network, studies on road network connecting China, Kazakhistan, Mangolia, Russian Federation and the Korean Peninsula and on identification of Asian Highway Routes in Turkjey are underway so as to complete the formation of Asian Highway Network for the whole Asia. The development of the Asian Highway Network is an on-going process with provision made for the revision of the network, once in every five years. The 2nd Revision of the Asian Highway Network is due around the year 2000. The Asian Highway Route is yet to be finalised by ESCAP.

(d) and (e) Ministry of Commerce under the Critical Infrastructure Balance Scheme (CIBS), provides funds for development of various infrastructure projects, namely, (i) Surma trunk road from Karimganj town to Sutarkandi at Indo-Bangladesh border, (ii) Export Promotion Industrial Park (EPIP) at Amingaon, Assam (iii) improvement of road near EPIP Byrnihat, Meghalaya (iv) installation of a Sub-station at EPIP Byrnihat, Meghalaya. (v) Construction of a composite building at Zokhwathar, Mizoram (vi) improvement of road from fire station, Chaumuhani to Akhura check post, Tripura and (vii) weighbridge at Akhura and Raghna, Land Custom Station, Tripura. Out of total cost of Rs. 18.6247 Crores of these projects, Rs. 14.7147 Crores are to be sanctioned from the Critical Infrastructure Balance Scheme, out of which, Rs. 10.11 Crores have been released during 1997-98 and 1998-99. These Projects are targetted to be completed within 2.3 years.

Ministry of Surface Transport has undertaken the work on the following National Highways which are providing road connectivity to neighbouring countries in North-East Region:—

(1) NH No. 39 with Myanmar at Moreh.

(2) NH No. 40 with Bangladesh at Dauki.

(3) NH No. 44 with Bangladesh at Sabroom.

(4) NH No. 51 with Bangladesh at Dalu.

(5) NH No. 62 with Bangladesh at Baghmara.

(6) NH No. 151 with Bangladesh at Sutarkandi.

(7) NH No. 152 with Bhutan starting from Patacharkuchi.

Sick Tea Gardens in Barak Valley Assam

1136. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of tea gardens in Barak Valley, the Southern part of Assam have become sick during the last three years;

(b) if so, the number of such sick tea gardens and the number of tea gardens workers affected; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to revive the sick tea gardens, more particularly the State owned tea Gardens, with details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) According to a survey conducted by Tea Board in late 1998 around 20 tea gardens in the Southern Assam have been found to be sick/weak. The number of sick/weak gardens in 1993 was 30 out of which 10 sick gardens have been revived and are stated to be functioning well. Information in respect of the number of tea garden workers affected is being collected from the concerned State Govt. and will be laid on the table of the House.

(c) With a view to revive sick/weak tea gardens Tea Board has extended the following benefits.

(i) Exemption to the contribution of National Tea Research Foundation for a period of 5 years from the date of taking over of sick tea gardens by a new management.

(ii) To consider the applications of such gardens for financial assistance even if the accumulated Provident Fund liability exceed Rs. 10,000/- (for regular gardens Board's financial assistance in the normal circumstances is not made available if the outstanding P.F. dues exceed Rs. 10,000/-).